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Panther Sports News

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Feb. 19, 1982
LS-AS-Wrestling

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARLESTON, IL--Geno Savegnago (Carol Stream-Glenbard North), the greatest wrestler in Eastern Illinois University history, has enough All-American hardware. It's his last shot and he wants a national championship.

The 190 lb. senior, who has been an All-American on both the NCAA I and II level all three seasons, says, "I want to win it all."

Savegnago and teammates will begin that quest next weekend (Feb. 26-27) in the NCAA I Midwest Regional at Baton Rouge.

Entering the qualifying regional, Savegnago is ranked No. 4 in the country by Amateur Wrestling News and might have been higher except nagging injuries have slowed what otherwise has been a successful 21-2 season.

Besides the six All-American awards, Savegnago also has a lifetime collegiate record of 124-21 with 39 pins. He needs just six more victories to surpass Dave Klemm's school mark of 129 wins.

The main goal, though, is the national title as Savegnago has built a steady progression towards the top spot with 8th, 5th and 3rd place finishes the past three seasons in Division I.

The NCAA national finals are March 11-13 at Ames, Iowa.

Savegnago pointedly says he must beat Colin Kilrain of Lehigh, Mike Mann of Iowa State and Kirk Myers of Northern Iowa. No surprise since those three are ranked 1-2-3 by Amateur Wrestling News.

"I'm ready for it (national finals)," says Savegnago, who has been slowed first by a bruised shoulder and then recently by broken fingers.

"The injuries are all gone . . . right now I'm mostly working on conditioning . . . getting ready to go seven hard minutes."

A former Illinois prep champ, Savegnago believes his current prowess on the mat is at its peak. "My down wrestling is my strength . . . where I'm on top and in control.

"I think I've also made a lot of progress on my feet . . . to the point where I think I can wrestle with anyone."

He gets no disagreement from head coach Ron Clinton, a former Oklahoma State national champ from the early 60s. "He'll be 100% healthy in two weeks . . . and right where he should be. He hasn't missed enough to affect him at nationals."

Savegnago already holds two school records for most consecutive wins (23) and most championships in one year (seven). This season he has been chosen the Most Valuable Wrestler at two open meets at St. Louis and University of Illinois.